

IN THE WATER COURT OF THE STATE OF MONTANA
UPPER MISSOURI DIVISION
WILLOW CREEK BASIN (41N)
PRELIMINARY DECREE

CLAIMANTS: Brian D. Aklestad; Jodi A. Aklestad

CASE: 41N-0258-R-2022
41N 152602-00

NOTICE OF FILING OF MASTER'S REPORT

This Master's Report was filed with the Montana Water Court on the above stamped date. Please review this report carefully.

You may file a written objection to this Master's Report within **10 days** of the stamped date if you disagree or find errors with the Master's findings of fact, conclusions of law, or recommendations. Rule 23, W.R.Adj.R. If the Master's Report was mailed to you, the Montana Rules of Civil Procedure allow an additional 3 days be added to the 10-day objection period. Rule 6(d), M.R.Civ.P. If you file an objection, you must serve a copy of the objection to all parties on the service list found at the end of the Master's Report. The original objection and a certificate of mailing to all parties on the service list must be filed with the Water Court.

If you do not file a timely objection, the Water Court will conclude that you agree with the content of this Master's Report.

MASTER'S REPORT

All water right claims that appeared in the Preliminary Decree for Willow Creek (Basin 41N) were subject to "issue remarks" resulting from pre-decree examination by the DNRC, objections, and counterobjections.

Claim 41N 152602-00 was consolidated into Case 41N-0258-R-2022 to resolve the issue remarks.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Claim 41N 152602-00 received the following substantive issue remark:

THIS RESERVOIR IS CLAIMED ON 41N 152603-00, IT DOES NOT APPEAR TO BELONG ON THIS CLAIM. THE RESERVOIR AND PLACE OF USE FOR SECTION 6 SHOULD BE REMOVED.

2. On June 14, 2022, the Court consolidated the above-captioned claim and set a filing deadline for the Claimants to provide information or evidence if they disagreed with the proposed modification to the reservoir and place of use for claim 41N 152602-00. Nothing was filed by the ordered deadline.

3. On October 3, 2022, the Court set another filing deadline for the Claimants to respond if they disagreed with the proposed modification to the reservoir and place of use for claim 41N 152602-00. Again, nothing was filed by the deadline.

PRINCIPLES OF LAW

1. A properly filed Statement of Claim for an existing water right is prima facie proof of its content. Section 85-2-227, MCA; Rule 10, W.R.Adj.R.

2. Prima facie proof may be contradicted and overcome by a preponderance of the evidence. Rule 19, W.R.Adj.R.

3. A preponderance of the evidence is evidence that shows a fact is “more probable than not.” *Hohenlohe v. State*, 2010 MT 203, ¶ 33, 357 Mont. 438, 240 P.3d 628.

4. If prima facie status is overcome, the burden shifts back to the claimant to demonstrate historical use. *79 Ranch v. Pitsch*, 204 Mont. 426, 432-33, 666 P.2d 215, 218 (1983).

5. Section 85-2-248(2), MCA, requires that the Water Court resolve all issue remarks that are not resolved through the objection process. *See also* Rule 7, W.R.Adj.R.

6. The Water Court may use information submitted by the DNRC, the Statement of Claim, and any other data obtained by the Court to evaluate a water right. Sections 85-2-227, -231(2), MCA.

7. When resolving issue remarks, the Water Court must weigh the information resulting in the issue remark and the issue remark against the claimed water right. Section 85-2-247(2), MCA. The factual evidence on which an issue remark is based must meet the preponderance of evidence standard before the prima facie status of a claim is overcome. 43Q 200996-00 et al., Order Establishing Volume and Order Closing Case, at 18, June 8, 2015.

8. If a claimant fails to comply with an order issued by the Water Court, the Court may issue orders of sanction that are just. Rule 22, W.R.Adj.R.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The information in the record is sufficient to resolve the above-listed issue remark appearing on the claim. Because the Claimants did not respond to the filing deadline, a preponderance of the evidence shows that the reservoir and place of use element should be modified as discussed in Finding of Fact No. 1, and the issue remark should be removed from the claim.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, this Master recommends that the Court adopt the changes as outlined above.

A post decree abstract of the water right claim reflecting the recommended changes is attached to this Report.

ELECTRONICALLY SIGNED AND DATED BELOW.

Service via USPS Mail:

Brian D. Aklestad
Jodi A. Aklestad
P.O. Box 58
Galata, MT 59444

**POST DECREE
ABSTRACT OF WATER RIGHT CLAIM
WILLOW CREEK
BASIN 41N**

Water Right Number: 41N 152602-00 STATEMENT OF CLAIM

Version: 3 -- POST DECREE

Status: ACTIVE

Owners: BRIAN D AKLESTAD
PO BOX 58
GALATA, MT 59444

JODI A AKLESTAD
PO BOX 58
GALATA, MT 59444

Priority Date: DECEMBER 31, 1972

Type of Historical Right: USE

Purpose (use): STOCK

Flow Rate: A SPECIFIC FLOW RATE HAS NOT BEEN DECREED FOR THIS USE FROM THIS ONSTREAM RESERVOIR. THE FLOW RATE IS LIMITED TO THE MINIMUM AMOUNT HISTORICALLY NECESSARY TO SUSTAIN THIS PURPOSE.

Volume: THIS RIGHT INCLUDES THE AMOUNT OF WATER CONSUMPTIVELY USED FOR STOCK WATERING PURPOSES AT THE RATE OF 30 GALLONS PER DAY PER ANIMAL UNIT. ANIMAL UNITS SHALL BE BASED ON REASONABLE CARRYING CAPACITY AND HISTORICAL USE OF THE AREA SERVICED BY THIS WATER SOURCE.

Source Name: GROUNDWATER

Source Type: GROUNDWATER

Point of Diversion and Means of Diversion:

<u>ID</u>	<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1		NWNWNW	1	32N	2E	TOOLE

Period of Diversion: JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

Diversion Means: WELL

Period of Use: JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

Place of Use:

<u>ID</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1			NWNWNW	1	32N	2E	TOOLE
2			NWNENW	1	32N	2E	TOOLE
3			NENWNE	1	32N	2E	TOOLE
4			NENENE	1	32N	2E	TOOLE